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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ UK Wants Porn Filters! ~

-* SEC: Disclose Cyber Attacks! *-
-* Microsoft Flags Security Failings! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

"~~~~~"

I wonder, is there such a thing as being over-sensitive to others feeling? As far as I'm concerned, political correctness continues to really go way overboard these days.

I was just getting myself another cup of tea while finishing up this week's issue when I happened to overhear a news story on the television. Teachers in a "local" elementary school are being told to tell their students that they are no longer going to be allowed to celebrate Halloween and a few other holidays (Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, etc.). Whether limited to on school behavior or not, I didn't hear. Why this is happening is because these celebrations might be sensitive to others!

Really? How long has the world been celebrating Halloween? C'mon, it's a harmless pseudo-holiday for kids (okay, even a lot of adult kids!). It's a fun day when we have ghosts and goblins, and yes, witches. If it's good enough to have a world-famous celebration in the home of witches: Salem, Massachusetts and not cause any offense, it should be good enough to celebrate in an elementary school!

There's a time for having concerns for people's sensitivities, and there's a time to sit back and really consider how some are going too far with it. I am so tired of hearing or reading stories about how this group and that group are flailing about with some cockamamie rationale how they are offended by some sort of time-honored celebration of sorts - whether it be a holiday or some other event. And it's not just holidays. People want to ban the Pledge of Allegiance because of the mention of "God". Or take the word "God" off of U.S. currency. Stop the Thanksgiving holiday because it's offensive to Native Americans. And there are many more such thoughts of being politically correct (or is that incorrect?). It's ridiculous.

Let kids be kids and let them have some fun. Next thing these PC advocates will be trying to tell your kids is that there's no such person as Santa Claus!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Nintendo DS The Best-Selling Game System!
"~~~~~" Unauthorized Access Hits PS Accounts!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Nintendo DS The Best-Selling Game System in U.S. History with 50 Million Units

In March 2009, Nintendo sold its 100 millionth DS system on a worldwide basis, but today the handheld game system set an impressive record in the United States: it crossed the 50 million marker, making it the best-selling video game system in U.S. history. This means that it has outsold systems like the PlayStation, PlayStation 2, and Nintendo's own Game Boy line.

"The Nintendo DS forever changed the gaming landscape, and the fact that consumers continue to embrace the platform is a testament to its value and mass appeal," said Scott Moffitt, Nintendo of America's executive vice president of Sales & Marketing.

Nintendo also used its press release to tout recent sales of its Nintendo 3DS. In September, the handheld posted sales of 260,000 units, besting its August total by 10 percent. Amid months of poor sales, Nintendo drastically cut the price of the 3DS by \$80 (to \$170) in August. Since then, the tide appears to be turning for the system. Recently, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D* became the first 3DS game to sell more than 500,000 copies in the United States.

Though Microsoft's Xbox 360 sales exceeded 430,000 units in September, Nintendo didn't have an all bad month. The Nintendo DS sold 145,000 units and the Wii sold 240,000, bringing Nintendo's total hardware sales for the month to 647,000. Not bad, but can the 3DS keep up the momentum?

Unauthorized Access Hits Sony PlayStation Accounts

Sony said Wednesday intruders staged a massive attempt to access user accounts on its PlayStation Network and other online entertainment services in the second major attack on its flagship gaming site this year.

The Tokyo-based company temporarily locked about 93,000 accounts whose IDs and passwords were successfully ascertained by the blitz. Sony sent email notifications and password reset procedures to affected customers on the PlayStation Network, Sony Entertainment Network and Sony Online Entertainment services.

Credit card numbers linked to the compromised accounts are not at risk, Sony said. It has "taken steps to mitigate the activity" and is investigating any wrongful use of the accounts themselves.

"Less than one tenth of one percent" of the service's customers may have been affected, Sony said in a statement.

The announcement follows an embarrassing data breach in April, which compromised personal data from more than 100 million online gaming and entertainment accounts and forced PlayStation Network to be shut for a month.

Sony was subsequently criticized for lax security and acting too slowly to inform customers as it grappled with one of the largest-ever security thefts.

Sony confirmed the latest incidents after its security systems detected an unusually high number of login attempts that failed, said Sony spokesman Sean Yoneda. The company suspects that those responsible obtained large data sets from other companies or sources, which were then used to try to access Sony accounts.

"What happened in April was a breach on our servers as we said in our announcements," Yoneda said. "But this time around, there was no intrusion on our servers. This was ... taking someone else's identity and trying to use that to access our services."

The unauthorized access attempts occurred between Oct. 7 and Oct. 10 and targeted accounts globally. The company said it is unclear whether the attempts were carried out by a single individual or multiple parties.

Sony's customer service centers around the world have not seen a spike in user calls related to the incidents, Yoneda said.

Under Chief Executive Howard Stringer, Sony aims to more deeply connect its hardware, content and services. Executives have said the hacker attacks in the spring did not derail that core strategy.

The PlayStation Network bounced back relatively quickly, with the vast majority of subscribers returning after Sony began restoring online gaming services in May.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

SEC Tells Companies To Disclose Cyber Attacks

U.S. securities regulators on Thursday issued guidelines for public companies to follow in disclosing cyber attacks following a rash of Internet crimes that caused lawmakers to call for clearer guidance on reporting the crimes.

The guidance, posted late on Thursday by the Securities and Exchange Commission, lays out examples of things that companies may be required to

disclose. The guidance comes after Senator John Rockefeller asked the SEC to issue it amid concern that companies were failing to mention data breaches in public filings.

The SEC said in its guidance that if a cyber event occurs and leads to losses then companies should "provide certain disclosures of losses that are at least reasonably possible."

"Intellectual property worth billions of dollars has been stolen by cyber criminals, and investors have been kept completely in the dark. This guidance changes everything," Rockefeller said in a statement.

"It will allow the market to evaluate companies in part based on their ability to keep their networks secure. We want an informed market and informed consumers, and this is how we do it," Rockefeller said in a statement.

Tom Kellermann, chief technology officer of security firm AirPatrol Corp., said that the guidance tells companies to report cyber attacks and disclose steps to remediate problems.

"They must also incorporate cyber events into their material risk reports," said Kellermann, who has advised U.S. President Obama on cyber policy.

There is a growing sense of urgency following breaches at Google Inc, Lockheed Martin Corp, the Pentagon's No. 1 supplier, Citigroup, the International Monetary Fund and others.

A report out earlier this month found that U.S. banks are losing ground in the battle to combat credit and debit card fraud because they balk at the expense of higher security. Globally, however, security is improving in the payment industry, according to data from The Nilson Report, a California trade publication.

There is some hope of U.S. legislation to address the problem, although the House of Representatives appears more interested in tackling it piecemeal while the Senate is opting for a more far-reaching approach.

Most of the concern has been focused on critical facilities like nuclear power, electricity, chemical and water treatment plants.

Microsoft Flags Firefox and Chrome for Security Failings

Microsoft has unveiled a website aimed at raising awareness of browser security by comparing the ability of Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and Google Chrome to withstand attacks from malware, phishing, and other types of threats.

Your Browser Matters gives the latest versions of Firefox and Chrome a paltry 2 and 2.5 points respectively out of a possible score of 4. Visit the site using the IE 9, however, and the browser gets a perfect score. IE 7 gets only 1 point, and IE 6 receives no points at all. The site refused to rate Apple's Safari browser in tests run by The Register.

The page is designed to educate users about the importance of choosing an up-to-date browser that offers industry-standard features. The ability to automatically warn users when they're about to download a malicious file,

to contain web content in a security sandbox that has no access to sensitive parts of the computer's operating system, and to automatically install updates are just three of the criteria.

The site gives Internet Explorer 9 a perfect score of 4

The site dings Firefox for a variety of omissions, including its inability to restrict an extension or a plug-in on a per-site basis, its failure to use Windows Protected Mode or a similar mechanism such to prevent the browser from modifying parts of the system it doesn't have access to, and its lack of a built-in feature to filter out malicious XSS, or cross-site scripting, code. Among other things, Chrome lost points for not using Windows features that protect against structured exception-handling overwrite attacks.

Reg readers still stuck in the rut of critiquing Microsoft security based on products released a decade ago are likely to be unimpressed. The reality is that over the past few years, Redmond has endowed Windows and IE with measures such as ASLR, or address space layout randomization, and DEP, or data execution prevention, that significantly reduce the damage attackers can do when they exploit buffer overflows and other bugs that are inevitable in any large base of code. Apple didn't pull ahead of Microsoft on this score until earlier this year with the release of its Mac OS X Lion.

It didn't take long for Mozilla developers to take issue with the critique.

"Microsoft's site is more notable for the things it fails to include: security technologies like HSTS, privacy tools like Do Not Track, and vendor response time when vulnerabilities are discovered," Johnathan Nightingale, Mozilla's director of Firefox engineering, said in a statement. He said: "Mozilla is fiercely proud of our long track record of leadership on security."

Partners throwing their endorsement behind the new Microsoft page include the Anti-Phishing Working Group, the Online Trust Alliance, and the Identity Theft Counsel.

Google+ Tops 40 Million Users

Google co-founder and chief executive Larry Page on Thursday said that its online social networking challenge to Facebook is growing fast and has topped 40 million users.

"People are flocking to Google+ at an incredible rate and we are just getting started," Page said during an earnings conference call.

He added that billions of digital photos are shared at Google+.

Page said social features highlighted at Google+ will be "baked in" to the Internet star's other online offerings.

"Last quarter we shipped 'plus' and now we are going to ship the Google part," Page said of weaving social and sharing features throughout the firm's platform.

"We are still at the very early stages of what technology can deliver,"

he continued. "These tools we use online will look very different in five years time and we are building these tools into Google-plus."

The Internet giant on September 20 opened [google.com/+](http://google.com/) to the public as it ramped up its challenge to leading social network Facebook.

The move came with an array of improvements Google to the social network it launched in an invitation-only test format on June 28.

Enhancements to Google+ included letting members take part in video-chat "Hangouts" using camera-enabled smartphones or tablet computers, or broadcast video presentations to groups of watchers using "Hangouts On Air."

Famous figures who have taken part in Google+ hangouts in past weeks include the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, and Desmond Tutu, the retired archbishop of Cape Town, who is also a renowned human rights activist.

Hands-on with Raven, An App-centric Web Browser for OS X

The choice between Chrome, Firefox and Safari just got a little tougher. A new OS-X-exclusive browser dubbed Raven takes the world of apps and brings them to the Web without sacrificing the style and simplicity the Apple operating system is known for.

Given that Raven was designed specifically for the Mac operating system, it should come as no surprise that its user interface bears a striking resemblance to all things Mac. You have your dock (albeit it to the left hand side) in a black panel, and this houses your applications. The overall design is minimalistic and stylish.

To navigate raven, you can choose to use the browser's apps, or take the traditional route via the Web in its basic form. The omnibox is a sparse strip across the top of the page, which strangely houses Raven's navigation tools. On the right hand side, you can find the tools to refresh, add a tab, star, bookmark, or return to the home page. All pretty standard fare.

You also have the option to turn your entire screen over to Raven, and given this browser's focus on apps and appearance, we can see how it wants to be the destination for much of your activity. Give it a strengthened app store with more production-oriented tools, and lightweight work could definitely be accomplished within Raven.

Being in beta means that there isn't a terribly large inventory of apps to play with, but Raven does a admirable job bringing users some key choices. The default applications of choice like Facebook, Twitter, CNN, the New York Times, Delicious, YouTube, and Flickr are all there, as are noteworthy additions like Vimeo, Hulu Plus, and Quora.

Raven takes on a desktop-like attitude, particularly with the social applications and those that require or cater to user interaction. Ubuntu and Apple users will appreciate the seamless experience of moving between installed software and the Web. The left-hand side panel holds all of your chosen apps, as well as navigation icons. Selecting an app then brings up your options for in-site actions.

For example, opening Twitter via the Raven app pulls up your command options for the site on that left-hand panel, placing them below the Twitter icon. Users can refer almost entirely to the left-hand panel once they're inside an application.

Apps like CNN pull up video or breaking news options (CNN specifically has its iReport feature installed). So while your instinct might be to use CNN's default navigations, there are benefits for more consumption-based websites as well.

Generally, working with Raven is a pleasure. It's stupid-simple to orient yourself with all of the navigation commands, and installing and using apps is quick and easy. Switching between apps and the native Web was seamless, an upgrade from Chrome's Web Store experience in our opinion. There was less of a 'marketplace' feel to installing apps, and they were deposited into the sidebar automatically instead of via a dedicated page. It's a small difference, indistinct to some, but Web apps themselves are some sort of compromise between bookmarks and desktop software, and this felt like a more natural choice.

The app organization could bear an upgrade, however. We'd love it if Raven would offer infinite scrolling for the left-hand sidebar so you can automatically paw through your apps instead of selecting the gear icon at the bottom to determine if they get to sit in one of the 12 coveted spots. Either that, or shrinking icon size based on how many you install, so you can view them all at once. As it stands, you can manually indicate your apps status by pressing the gear in the bottom left-hand corner.

Our only major complaint is that we wish Raven weren't a Mac-specific browser. It's not as fast as browser dominators like Chrome and Firefox, but we like how it toes the line between app-dependent and Web-enabled. Raven has its early kinks to work out, but given the thinning line between the Web and the desktop, this is a visually interesting and intuitive solution to closing that gap a little more.

Facebook Lawsuit Prompts Look Back at Legal Troubles

A woman from Louisiana is about to take on Facebook. Janet Seamon, from Baton Rouge, *a*, has filed a class action lawsuit against the social networking giant, claiming that Facebook collects and stores users' Internet browsing history without the knowledge of the users. Former Louisiana Attorney General Richard Leyoub filed the suit on Ms. Seamon's behalf. Since the start of the company, it has had its fair share of troubles and here is some more information on Facebook.

* Facebook was founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg while he was a student at Harvard University.

* Eduardo Saverin originally helped Zuckerberg fund the site when it was only exclusive to Harvard University.

* It was originally called thefacebook.

* Two other Harvard students, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes helped Zuckerberg run the company and eventually Moskovitz along with Mark Zuckerberg dropped out of Harvard to run Facebook fulltime.

- * In 2005 the name was changed to Facebook, and the domain name facebook.com was purchased for \$200,000.
- * It started out as a social networking site for college students only, and then in September 2006 Facebook opened up its site to everyone.
- * Facebook became so popular that it beat out Google for the site that users spend the most time on.
- * But as Facebook became more and more popular, Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss along with their business partner Divya Narendra filed a lawsuit against Mark Zuckerberg and the company.
- * The Winklevoss twins and Narendra were also students at Harvard University who had hired Zuckerberg to work on their similar social networking site HarvardU, now called ConnectU, but instead, they allege, Zuckerberg stole their idea and launched Facebook.
- * The lawsuit was filed in 2004, and it was settled in 2008.
- * The settlement was reportedly \$65 million.
- * However, the Winklevoss twins attempted to undo the settlement, appealing to a court that Facebook misrepresented how much the company was actually worth, which would entitle them to more money.
- * In April 2011, an appeals court ruled against the twins and upheld the original settlement.
- * The story of Facebook was turned into a movie, The Social Network, which was released in 2010 and made close to \$100 million.
- * Mark Zuckerberg is the second youngest billionaire in the world, with Dustin Moskovitz, who works with him being the youngest.
- * Facebook currently has over 800 million users, with fifty percent of them logging in at least once a day.

Google's Buzz Is Dead

Buzz is dead. Google said Friday it was shutting down the social-networking product to focus on its new service, Google+.

Buzz had been launched in 2010 as the software giant's social-networking vehicle. But it quickly became embroiled in privacy issues that led to an investigation and settlement with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, and an international uproar.

In a posting on The Official Google Blog, Vice President for Product Bradley Horowitz wrote Friday that Buzz and the Buzz API will be shut down within a few weeks. "We learned a lot from products like Buzz," he wrote, "and are putting that learning to work every day in our vision for products like Google+."

He said that while users "obviously won't be able to create new posts" with Buzz following the shutdown, they will be able to look at existing

content on their Google Profile, and download it using Google Takeout.

Buzz was built around the company's popular Gmail, and it enabled the sharing of updates, photos, videos and other material and information with friends. But it caused an uproar when the automated process revealed users' e-mail contacts and friends, without their permission. With Buzz, lists of friends were automatically created from Gmail contacts and most-frequent e-mail contacts, even though some might not be friends.

At the time of the controversy, the Electronic Privacy Information Center's Marc Rotenberg told The New York Times that there was concern that "Gmail users are being driven into a social-networking service that they didn't sign up for." Google said the auto-friend feature was intended to get people started.

Buzz got the buzzer about privacy violations not only from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, but such other countries as France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

In a letter to Google, privacy officials in those countries wrote at the time that Buzz, "in essence," took Gmail, a private one-to-one e-mail service, and turned it into a social networking service "without adequately informing Gmail users about how this new service would work or providing sufficient information to permit informed consent decisions." The officials said this violated a basic principle that users should be able to control their private information.

In the FTC settlement last fall, Google agreed to establish a \$8.5 million fund to support organizations focusing on Internet privacy policy or privacy education, in addition to covering lawyers' fees.

Chief Executive Larry Page said this week that Google +, which was launched over the summer, now has more than 40 million users. By comparison, social-networking giant Facebook has more than 800 million users.

Buzz's demise is only one of the products that Google is shutting down. Horowitz also said that Code Search, which had been designed to help searches for open-source code, and Jaiku, a product purchased in 2007 that allows users to send updates to friends, will both close in January.

Additionally, social-networking features on iGoogle will also end at that time, and the University Research Program for Google Search, providing API access to search results for some academic institutions, is ending. And Google Labs closes Friday, with its experiments becoming part of product efforts.

Rustock: Civil Case Closed

Microsoft has officially announced that our civil case against the operators of the Rustock botnet (a major source of spam) has been closed and our teams have turned over the information we've gathered to the FBI.

The Rustock botnet is considered one of the largest sources of spam on the Internet and our case is helping to reduce the effects of the botnet and ensure that it will never be used for cybercrime again.

Learn how to clean an infected computer and help protect your PC with botnet protection and avoid malware.

What is the Rustock botnet?

The Rustock botnet is a network of infected computers controlled by cybercriminals and used for spam, fraud, and other cybercrime. The owners of infected computers probably had no idea that their computer was being used to send spam.

What did the Rustock botnet do?

Most of the spam messages generated by the Rustock botnet promoted counterfeit or unapproved generic pharmaceuticals from unlicensed and unregulated online drug sellers. Rustock spam also used Microsoft's trademark to promote these drugs. In another scheme, Rustock-generated email lured people into lottery scams in which spammers attempted to convince people that they had won a lottery. The victims were told that they needed to send the spammers money to collect the larger lottery winnings.

Help protect yourself against these kinds of email and web scams.

Microsoft is offering a \$250,000 reward for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of Rustock's operators. Any tips should be sent directly to the FBI at MS_Referrals@ic.fbi.gov.

Dennis Ritchie, Creator of Unix and C, Dies at 70

One of the most influential figures in the history of computing, Dennis Ritchie, has passed away at the age of 70 after a long illness.

Ritchie is credited with creating the programming language C, one of the most widely used and influential languages today. He was also one of the creators of operating system UNIX, whose variants - most notably Linux and OS X - are also widely used today.

Ritchie, often referenced as dmr (a part of his email address that he used in various technical discussion groups), has had an immense influence on the computing world. Among his many accomplishments is a Turing award that he received in 1983 (together with Ken Thompson) for his work on UNIX, and the National Medal of Technology, which he received in 1999 (again, jointly with Thompson).

Programmers will perhaps best remember Ritchie for his famous "hello, world" program, which is used in many programming textbooks, even those that don't pertain to C, as an example of a very simple computer program.

David Cameron To Ask ISPs To Offer Porn Filters

According to new measures to be announced by Prime Minister David Cameron, online pornography watchers will have to place a special request with their Internet Service providers (ISPs) to watch pornographic or sexualised

content online.

The prime minister is holding a summit at No.10 today with 30 media and retail executives, including broadcasters, magazine editors, trade bodies and advertisers, said the Daily Mail. Cameron is expected to announce the crackdown after Mothers Union charity chief executive Reg Bailey submitted a report on the matter after six months of study.

Bailey's recommendations included providing parents with a website where they can register and track complaints, putting age restrictions on music videos and ensuring retailers offer age-appropriate clothes for children.

In June, Cameron wrote to Bailey saying, "I very much agree with the central approach you set out."

The letter said, "As you say, we should not try and wrap children up in cotton wool or simply throw our hands up and accept the world as it is. Instead, we should look to put 'the brakes on an unthinking drift towards ever-greater commercialisation and sexualisation'."

Following the report, a ban could be implemented on children of up to 15 being employed as 'brand ambassadors' or in peer-to-peer marketing campaigns, said the Daily Mail.

As part of the crackdown on the sexualisation of childhood, four leading Internet service providers will be asked to offer customers the option to block adult content at the point of subscription. Those who want to visit pornographic sites will first have to 'opt in'.

Under the new measures, BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin will offer the protection for smartphones, laptops and PCs.

The prime minister will also launch Parentport - a website where people can complain about inappropriate content. Cameron is also expected to back a ban on billboards displaying sexualised images near schools.

The service providers, on their part, seem to be enthusiastic about the proposed changes.

According to the Guardian, the four major ISPs said in a statement that they "have worked closely with Government and a range of stakeholders to swiftly introduce measures addressing recommendations set out in the Bailey Report."

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